# State Evangelism Conf. coming to Brandon

By William H. Perkins Jr. Editor

The 2015 State Evangelism Conference will kick off on January 25 with a special worship service at Brandon Church, Brandon, and continue throughout the next day with preaching, praise, and dinner courtesy of the host church.

"We're asking Mississippi Baptist churches to consider turning out for the Sunday evening worship service, to come as a church family to a worship event that is only available to them when the State Evangelism Conference is close enough to their area that they can all attend together," said Don Lum, the conference's coordinator and director of evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) in Jackson.

In Jackson.

Lum pointed out that the annual State Evangelism Conference rotates among the various sections of the state, and it will probably be a while before central Mississippi churches again have this opportunity.

Bring your whole church family to worship in this special setting, he said.

The State Evangelism Conference of the state of the state

"The State Evangelism Conference is really an unrivaled worship and fellowship experience. It's not just for pastors. This conference is for all Mississippi Baptists. Many lay people come to the conference

HERE AMISE JANUARY 25-26 2015 2015 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

every year, and go back to their local churches inspired and prepared to win people to the Lord," Lum said.

The Jan. 25 session begins at 6 p.m. The morning session on Jan. 26 begins at 9:15 a.m. The Jan. 26 afternoon session begins at 1:30 p.m. The Jan. 26 evening session begins at

A complimentary dinner is being provided by Brandon Church for conference attendees, from 4:30-6 p.m. on Jan. 26. "Even if you're just getting off work that day, come enjoy the meal and evening session with us." Lum said.

with us," Lum said.

Scheduled speakers include:

Phil Hoskins, evangelist and pastor of Higher Ground Church in Kingsport, Th. He will speak on Jan.25 at the 6 p.m. worship service and at 9:40 a.m. on January 26.

9:40 a.m. on January 26.

Jonathan Falwell, senior pastor of Thomas Road Church in Lynchburg, Va. He will speak at 10:40 a.m. on Jan 26.

Junior Hill, evangelist and president of Junior Hill Ministries in Hartselle, Al. He will speak at 1:45 p.m. on Jan. 26

speak at 1:45 p.m. on Jan, 26
Tommy Green, senior pastor of First Church, Brandon, Fl. He will speak at 2:45 p.m. on Jan. 26.

Jim Futral, MBCB executive director-treasurer. He will speak at 3:45 p.m. on Jan. 26.

James Merritt, lead pastor

James Merritt, lead pastor of Cross Pointe Church in Duluth, Ga. He will speak at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 26.

L. Lavon Gray, minister of music at First Church, Jackson, will lead praise and worship at all sessions.

There is no admission charge for the conference nor the Jan. 26 evening meal. No childcare is provided. For more information, contact the MBCB Evangelism Department at (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: lburris@mbcb.org. Web site: mbcb.org.

# T.W. Hunt, author and prayer warrior, dies



HUNT

SPRING, Texas (BP) — Thomas W. (T.W.) Hunt, widely recognized in Christian circles as an authority on prayer, died Dec. 11 at the age of 85.

Hunt was the author of such

Hunt was the author of such books as The Mind of Christ, and Disciple's Prayer Life. He was a former professor of music and missions at Southwestern Seminary in Fort-Worth.

Born in 1929, Hunt grew up in a Christian home and accept-ed Christ at age 10, although it would be many years before he fully surrendered to God's plan for his life. Until then, Hunt earned bachelor, master's and doctoral degrees in musicology and piano and taught music classes at the University of North Texas and, later, at Oklahoma College for Women.

"He truly walked with the Lord and demonstrated that walk each and every day. He was my friend, mentor and encourager."

Mark Estep

pastor of Spring Church in Spring, Texas

Hunt followed God's call to teach in Southwestern's school of church music. Within a few years, he had transformed the way music was used for missions. Specifically, he developed the Music in Missions class that is still in the school's catalogue today. The new course, for which Hunt wrote the textbook, offered students techniques for using music to communicate the message of the Gospel by focusing on the indigenous music of the particular mission field. This concept would later prove to have played an integral role in revolutionizing music evangelism.

Mark Estep, pastor of Spring Church in Spring, Texas, where Hunt was a longtime member, said Hunt was the most godly person he ever met. "He truly walked with the Lord and demonstrated that walk each and every day. He was my friend, mentor and encourager."

Hunt was preceded in death by his wife Laverne in 2009. Funeral arrangements were not available at press time.

# Insida Direction 4 Sunday Silessons .... Editorial.... Bibliociphe How to Beo a Christian ... Just for the R



# From the editor

# Dear Legislator

The 2015 session of the Mississippi Legislature will be revving up in just a few days. As anyone knows who even casually tracks the annual threecasually tracks the annual three-month sessions of the Legislature, many bills are introduced but relatively few make it into law. The complex set of checks and balances both Inside the legisla-tive process and in the broader branches of state government have a tendency to winnow the hundreds and hundreds of bills that are filed and pre-filed for each session.

that are filed and pre-filed for each session.

Legislators have to absorb their share of criticism, cynicism, and caricature during their time under the hoary domes of the New Capitol in downtown Jackson. Some of the ridicule showered on them is likely deserved (by some of them, anyway), but a fair amount is not deserved. They are, after all, our fellow Mississippians.

For every citizen who couldn't

deserved. They are, after all, our fellow Mississippians.

For every citizen who couldn't find their way to either chamber in the Capitol but feels free to regularly slam legislators, there are at least a few of us who realize that most legislators are well-meaning people who must put aside their families, businesses, and community activities for one-quarter of each year to come to Jackson for the session.

That's no small sacrifice, so it would behoove us to occasionally tell them how much we appreciate the effort even as we loudly complain about what we perceive they are doing or not doing.

The Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission (CAC) has some helpful hints on how to make contact with legislators, how to get a point across without

how to get a point across without dooming favored legislation, and how to follow up on the progress

The best communicating is done face-to-face. Make an appointment and be on time. Bring. an outline of the one or two main issues you want to discuss. Be brief, recommend specific solu-tions, and leave a written sum-

mary of your important points.
It's fair to ask the legislator for his/her position on the bills in which you are interested. Don't take it personally if the legisla-tor disagrees with your position. Rather than argue, discuss differ-ences in a pleasant manner.

If a personal visit is not possible, write your legislator. Writing can save a legislator's time (a plus in your favor) and provides a record of your position on proposed legislation. Include your full name, address, and telephone number. The address for legislators while in session is P.O. Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215-1018.

Individual e-mail addresses can be accessed at legislature.ms.gov.

Do your research. Know the bills about which you are writing, and include any specific information you have such as the bill number and details. Bill status can be attained by calling (601) 359-3360 for the House of Representatives, and (601) 359-3229 for the Senate. These numbers are valid only while the legislature is in session. The web site is legislature.ms.gov.

Telephone calls do not substitute for personal visits and letters. When telephoning legislators, however, make efficient use of your time with them. Identify yourself and the bills you are for or against (again, one or two main issues is a good limit). Explain your reasoning and let them know how you want them to vote.

The telephone number for legislators while they are in session is (601) 359-3770. Just as with personal visits and letters, end the conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

Citizens can request to testify before committees about bills they strongly support or oppose. Find out the name of the appropriate committee chairman and contact him/her as soon as possible. If given the opportunity to testify, get to the point quickly and be prepared to answer any questions legislators may have about your position.

The CAC, a ministry funded by the Mississippi Cooperative Program, stands ready to assist Mississippi Baptists who want to get involved in this grand process of self-governance we enjoy in our state and nation.

They can be reached at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. E-mail: rmccollum@christian-action.com.

Take the time to get involved.

Take the time to get involved, or else just be content with whatever comes out of the legislative pipeline. Those are really our only wo choices.



# Celebrate State Mission Offering!

Pireworks are always associated with New Year celebrations.
Once again we are celebrating the extraordinary generosity of Mississippi Baptists. The 2014 Margaret Lackey Offering has exceeded the \$2 million goal by more than \$75,000! It's a mis-

goal by more than \$75,000! It's a missional explosion!

The Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering sends volunteer missionaries, develops new church planters, evangelizes the lost, and responds compassionately in the face of natural disasters. The Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering trains future mission leaders at camp, goes to jail for Jesus, and welcomes sailors to port on the Coast.

Aren't you glad to know that your mission gifts count for enlarging the Kingdom of God? Our theme last year reminded us of God's promise to "Give Us A New Heart!" He has answered our prayers by causing our hearts to over-

Us A New Heart!" He has answered our prayers by causing our hearts to overflow with generosity and thanksgiving. We rejoice in your responsiveness to His Spirit's prompting.

The 2015 state mission prayer emphasis calls us to discover the potential of a "new creation" that can be ours in Christ. The offering will feature stories of life-changes that are occurring because of your generosity.

Look around Mississippi and see if



**Guest opinion** with David Michel

there are opportunities for you to help create life-change. He calls us to act as His ambassadors and invite our neigh-bors to find new life through a redemp-tive relationship with God.

Please accept the gratitude of thos who benefit from and lead out in star who benefit from and lead out in sta-mission ministries. We could not be effective without the help of everyone who hung posters, stuffed bulletins, made phone calls, presented ser-mons, lead prayers, and wrote offer-ing checks. You are the new heart of missions in Mississippi. May you know God's richest blessings!

Michel is Associate Executive Direc-tor for Mission Strategy at the Missis-sippi Baptist Convention Board. He can be contacted at dmichel@mbcb.org.

### BäptistRecord

n H. Perkins Jr.

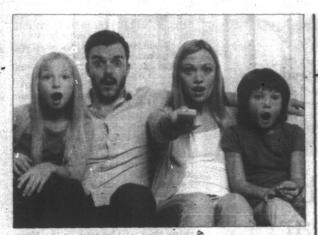
BAPTISTS

ress to: The Bapti ord, P.O. Bex 530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800 Fax: (601) 292-3330

VOLUME 139 \* NUMBER 1 \* ISSN-0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201, Substription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing



# Family friendly shows? Don't rely on it, says PTC

NASHVILLE (BP) — Contemporary television series show-casing family life will likely include sex, profanity, and violence that make the entertainment unsuitable for family viewing, the Parents Television Council (PTC) in Los Angeles, Ca., has found.

As many as 99% of broadcast television shows about family that PTC studied contained some form of adult content in 2013, they noted in a Dec. 10 report. Profanity was found in 94% of shows, sexual content in 84%, and violence in 33%.

Among all 202 episodes of family-themed shows studied, only two episodes of The Millers on CBS were found suitable for family viewing, the PTC told Baptist Press. The sitcom has since been cancelled.

"Parents often assume that TV shows about families are safe viewing choices," PTC President Tim Winter said in a press release, "but our study shows that families who watch TV shows about families will be barraged by sex and profanity — even on TV-PG-rated shows. This is unacceptable."

Shows marketed specifically

Snows marketed specifically to families are at fault, Winter said. "Even on some of the more 'family-friendly' shows, there is still adult content such as pixilated nudity and bleeped profanity. Also disturbing is that adult characters aren't the only ones 'delivering' the lines with adult content — children are too."

Child development research shows that children under the age of eight have difficulty critically comprehending televised media messages and are prone to accept messages as truthful, the PTC reported.

The report, titled Remembering Family: Insights and

#### Parents Television Council

PTC (parentstv.org) is a non-partisan education organization advocating responsible entertainment. It was founded in 1995 to ensure that children are not constantly assaulted by sex, violence, and profanity on television and in other media. The full PTC report is at parentstv.org/media/feed.

New Research on Family and Media, found only one percent of family-themed TV shows to be suitable for family viewing.

This study examined only whether adult content was present and does not include data describing how much content was present in each show. PTC analysts examined every major broadcast network and every primetime show that featured family as central to the storyline. The study period was from the beginning of each network's fall 2013 season through December 31, 2013.

December 31, 2013.

Competition with cable shows drives network television to include objectionable material, Winter said. "Ironically, broadcast TV shows have the capacity to attract many millions of viewers, and therefore, more ad dollars, while cable networks can be 'successful' with only a few million viewers."

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# Ga. Baptists defend suspended fire chief

ATLANTA (BP and local reports) — Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) leaders are rallying to defend Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran, who has been suspended without pay for a month and ordered to undergo sensitivity training over a book he wrote that upholds a biblical view of sexuality.

view of sexuality.

Cochran is a deacon, Sunday School teacher, and Bible study leader at Atlanta's Elizabeth Church, which is affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention. A two-time Atlanta fire chief, Cochran also served as U.S. Fire Administrator under U.S. President Barack Obama from 2009-10.

GBC executive director J. Robert White said in a news release issued by the GBC Public Affairs Committee, "It is time for believers to stand up for their religious beliefs, biblical principles, and fellow Christians who are punished or marginalized for their faith."

White affirmed the Public Affairs Committee for its "call to action for all fellow believers to take a stand." The Public Affairs Committee is charged with responsibilities similar to Mississippi Baptists' Christian Action Commission.

The news release called on Christians and people of faith across Georgia to:

sign a petition on behalf of Cochran at gab-

aptist.org/petition.

support Cochran by purchasing his book on Amazon, Who Told You That You Are Naked? which is at the center of the firestorm.

enlist as many churches and believers as possible to contact Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed to reverse his actions against Cochran.

The Public Affairs Committee also called on

The Public Affairs Committee also called on Reed to "Acknowledge Chief Cochran's First Amendment Rights..., Make a public apology for the suspension and grief it has caused the Chief and his family..., and Restore Chief Cochran's pay and reputation as an honorable Fire Chief."

Reed suspended Cochran over such passages in the chief's 162-page, self-published book as a definition of uncleanness being the "opposite of purity; including sodomy, homosexuality, lesbianism, pederasty, bestiality, and all other forms of sexual perversion."

Cochran's book stemmed from a series of men's studies at Elizabeth Church titled, A Ouest for Authentic Manhood.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, in an article about Cochran's suspension, noted that Cochran defined his role as fire chief in the book as cultivating a culture "for the glory of God" as well as saving lives and property.

well as saving lives and property.

In a statement targeting Cochran's comments about biblical sexuality, Reed declared, "I want to be clear that the material in Chief Cochran's book is not representative of my personal beliefs, and is inconsistent with the administration's work to make Atlanta a more welcoming city for all of her citizens — regardless of their sexual orientation, gender, race, and religious beliefs."

In addition to suspending Cochran and

In addition to suspending Cochran and ordering sensitivity training, the mayor ordered the chief not to distribute the book on city property.

Reed's spokeswoman Anne Torres also said Cochran is being investigated for whether he had discriminated against any employees and whether his personal views had interfered with his management of the fire department, according to the Journal-Constitution.

Former Mississippi pastor Gerald Harris, editor of the Georgia Baptist Convention's newspaper, The Christian Index, wrote in an editorial about Cochran's suspension, "I realize that our



COCHRAN

"... when you begin to look beneath the surface, acknowledge the threats and analyze them, you begin to realize that our religious liberty is under an organized and concentrated assault."

**Gerald Harris** 

editor of the Georgia Baptist Convention's newspaper

churches are open and our religious institutions continue to function and everything on the religious front may look copacetic. But when you begin to look beneath the surface, acknowledge the threats and analyze them, you begin to realize that our religious liberty is under an organized and concentrated assault."

Cochran as a layman "never tried to market his self-published book, but has shared the book with his church and has given books to his colleagues at work," Harris wrote. "After work on Monday the Chief has hosted a Bible study for those who were interested. Other colleagues have frequently sought him out for spiritual counseling. He consistently provided counsel by sharing truths from the Word of God."

Cochran is a native of Shreveport, La., who joined that city's fire department in 1981 and served as fire chief there from 1999-2008 until being tapped as Atlanta's fire chief. He holds an undergraduate degree from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, and a master's degree from Louisiana Tech University in Ruston.

According to the GBC news release, Reed can be contacted by email at mkreed@atlantaga.gov. Telephone: (404) 330-6100. Mail: 55 Trinity Ave. Suite 2500, Atlanta, GA 30303.

Tow that we're in position of a brand new, sparkling, unmessed up, New Year, 2015, I was wondering what's new about it. What got me to thinking about it was a fellow that I ran into who was neither excited about Christmas or the holidays or the New Year. According to him, the New Year is just the same old same old. At the moment I didn't want to make a big issue out of it, but the more I thought about it, the more I was convinced that the old year and the new year is in some measure, if not in large measure, a lot of what we make out of it.

Sometimes the problem is that we don't recognize what's new in the New Year and so we just keep all the old stuff that we had and drag it into another calendar. Or to paraphrase the president, if you like your bad attitude, you can keep your bad attitude, and if you like your constant frown, you can keep your constant frown.

And about this time next year you'll find out that 2015 was just about like 2014 except maybe slightly worse.

What is there about midnight of

What is there about midnight of Dwember 31 turning to January 1 and something incredible taking place? We make a big deal out of it and possibly there is some new in a New Year. Now everyone doesn't start a new year when we do. To study calendars is a fascinating thing and there are many other dating mechanisms than just our traditional Western calendar, sometimes called the Christian calendar or the Gregorian calendar. Whichever calendar you date by, most cultures see significance in a new day as the earth begins to make a new trek around the sun. But what's new?

For one thing, there are new seasons all of which could be refreshing and exciting. Sitting here in the cold days of winter, we



# What's New about Your New Year?

will, in only weeks, be walking into the dynamic new growth and splendor of spring, then wonderful warmsummer, then the artistry and beauty of color in fall, and back to the cool down of winter. But there are more seasons than just those four. The wise man of the Old Testament wrote at some see as a very negative book, Ecclesiastes, and in chapter 3 he reminds us that life is made up of the various seasons. "A time to be born, and a time to die" (v. 2) the bookends of life, but he didn't stop there. All in between there are those things that we find to be wonderful and exciting, uplifting and enriching, but he includes the reality of those things that we think are difficult and downers. The truth is many of them are just other seasons of life. Each in its own way to be faced, understood and even celebrated. While rarely do.

we ever look at that as a good thing, I have seen death arrive welcomed and embraced by saints as though it was a refreshing, old friend at the end of the journey of life. Probably if you read through Ecclesiastes 3 and its opening verses and pause long enough to let God speak to your heart, you will begin to see some of the winter seasons of life as not being enemies, so much as a means of God to work in our lives.

In this New Year, there are not only new seasons but new reasons. This is even more important than the seasons because whatever you do the seasons will roll around. But the reasons, that's for you and me to determine. What is your reason for living? Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

Strange, isn't it? The more of our life that is poured out, the more life we have. And the more that we grasp and hold on and become self-centered, the less of life we enjoy. It is amazing but true. What are your reasons for getting up each day? I know job and work, put food on the table, exist, but what is at stake is purpose for living. Not just existence but being engaged in those things in life that bring meaning and joy. This New Year will be filled with 365 days, each one of which will have one to a dozen good reasons for you to be alive. The Lord has a plan for your life, a good plan for good things, and if you can set you aside enough to see His perfect plan you will find the joys of life flowing

what's new? Well, one other thing that will be new in the New Year is treasons. The word treason can also be called betrayal and there will be new treasons. See, sin is always a wrong decision that is a betrayal of the plan of God and even self-betrayal. You rob yourself of the blessings of what God wants to do in your life when you don't do what He wants you to do. You may have had some of those days in the past, but there will be those decisions that will be made in the future. Listen to God and obey Him. Do not betray yourself. Do not commit treason against your own heart. God will help you. In fact He brings new things every day in every way, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). Our Christ makes all things new and we can look to Him and this will without a doubt be a New Year and God will mightily bless you.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

#### College and Seminary News



Gerald "Guy" Burke III, left, of Brookhaven, received the doctor of ministry degree Dec. 13 from **NEW ORLEANS SEMINARY**. He is pastor of First Church, Indianola, and is shown with NOBTS president Chuck Kelly.

#### In other College News:

➤ Blessed With Tired Hands is the title of the new book by photographer Barbara Gauntt spotlighting extraordinary sculptor and painter Samuel Marshall Gore. A beloved art professor for more than six decades at Mississippi College, Gore has many admirers all over the globe. The book by the University Press of Mississippi captures the amazing life and thought-provoking works of this splendid Christian artist. To pre-order a copy of the book, go to www.mc.edu/gore.

# STAFF WANTED Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries

Houseparent couples for the Baptist Home for Children, Monticello, Ark. These full-time positions include salary, medical insurance, life insurance and paid leave.

Activity director for the Baptist Home for Children in Monticello, Ark. This full-time position includes salary, medical insurance, life insurance and paid leave. Experience with horses is preferred.

Contact: Randy Luper, 870.367.5358 or rluper@ abchomes.org. www.abchomes.org

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HZU BREFUX YC YIO ENJX.

ZYXUR CYIOHUUT: HPY

Clue: I = U

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Nahum 1:7

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

# AMBF

### THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Foundation News - Winter 2015

# Stewarding Your Stuff



Daniel Hall Executive Director MBF

When you hear the term "stewardship," what thought comes to your mind? Are you reminded of the annual emphasis at your church through which the operating and ministry budget for the upcoming year is prepared, presented, and pledged? For you, does stewardship focus primarily on making periodic contributions of your income to

and through your local church? Have you ever considered the possibility that biblical stewardship is a concept that is not limited to the preaching and practice of giving a tithe (10%) of one's income to ministry and missions? Have you ever considered the inseparable relationship between biblical stewardship and discipleship? For instance...

A DISCIPLE is one whose life is (1) Rooted in a relationship with Jesus Christ and who (2) Reflects this relationship by following Jesus' example of dying to a self so others might know God and live in fellowship with Him. One who (3) Receives the call to follow Jesus as a lifelong journey of obedience and submission to His lordship, and who (4) Recognizes that following Jesus is more important than material possessions (see Luke 14:25-35).

A STEWARD is one who is (1) <u>Assigned</u> the management of an estate and who is (2) <u>Accountable</u> to the estate's owner. One who gives (3) <u>Attention</u> to the future and who is (4) <u>Assured</u> of blessings that accompany faithful stewardship (see Matthew 25:14-30).

"Rise Up in Christ" (Acts 3:6, 16) was the thematic emphasis for the Mississippi Baptist Convention during 2014 white "Building Blocks of a Bold Disciple" (Acts 5:42) serves as the 2015 emphasis. Against the backdrop of these two themes, please receive this edition of Foundation News as a primer on Christian stewardship and bold discipleship within the context of estate stewardship.

# Stewards of the Message to be Proclaimed

Christian disciples, as followers of Jesus Christ, are confronted with daily opportunities to practice stewardship in every aspect of our lives. Therefore, everyone who professes Jesus as Lord is called to be a Steward of the Message to be Proclaimed. The important message of which we are stewards is introduced in Act 3:6 when Peter declared, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as

Christian disciples, as follow- I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Jesus Christ, are confronted with Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Through the faithful stewardship of Peter and John, a 40-year old lame man encountered the transforming power of Jesus. Jesus Christ is still in the business of putting people back on their feet and encouraging them to engage in a daily and everlasting walk of fellowship with Him. How is this possible? Because, as Peter proclaimed in Acts 4:13, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." No attempt to tell the story of Jesus is complete without that message. Furthermore, genuine disciples of our Lord are stewards, entrusted by Him, to proclaim that message of good news and hope.

## Stewards of the Moment that is Presented

Message to be Proclaimed, we also are Stewards of the 'Christ is real to you, ev'ry moment, ev'ry day." The mo-Moment that is Presented. I do not believe that Peter and ment to tell others about Jesus and his redeeming love is John's encounter with the lame man was mere coincidence nor an occasion offered by chance. Rather, in the providence of God, Peter and John experienced a divine appointment with one man which eventually led to an even larger harvest. Acts 4:4 recounts, "And the number of men grew to about 5,000." Had Peter and John not availed themselves to this opportunity, they would not have been in a position to experience what followed as thousands came to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

When the Sanhedrin charged Peter and John not to teach or preach any more in the name of Jesus, Peter resolutely testified, "... We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The last phrase of the hymn Share His Love echoes the focus and fervor of

While all Christians are called to be Stewards of the Peter's testimony with, "And show the world that Jesus

NOW! Why? Because we are stewards of the moment that is presented and, as hymnwriter Will L. Thompson reminds us, "Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing. Passing from you and from me."

Jesus declared, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field," Matthew 9:37-38. We are stewards of the message to be proclaimed and the moment that is presented. Christians are also called to be...

## Stewards of the Measure that is Provided

Jesus to "Give and it will be given to you, a good mea- generosity, the merchant handles the filling of each sure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. For customer's basket in such a manner as to allow for

of a

Recorded in Luke's gospel is the exhortation by merchant who sells grain. With a spirit of fairness and with the measure that you give, the same will be measured more grain to be added to the point of overflow. This out to you" (Luke imagery reflects the manner in which God gives to The us. We tend to give to Him with thimble-sized porword pic- tions but God gives to us with a front-end loader kind ture is of approach.

In his book entitled God & Your Stuff: The Vital Link Between Your Possessions and Your Soul, Dr. Wesley K. Wilmer noted that the Bible contains 2,172 scriptures dealing with possessions. Wilmer also observed that 17 of Jesus' 38 parables focus on possessions. He stated, "About 15 percent of God's Word deals with possessions - treasures hidden in fields, pearls, talents, pounds, stables, and so on. Obviously God understood that believers would find this a difficult area of their lives to turn over to Him."

> Lest you think, "I don't have an estate" and feel that Luke's admonition applies only to those who qualify for the old television program "The Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous," please know-If you have stuff, you have an estate.

24:1), he expects us to be good stewards of the measure that he has provided. Even still, many of us may be prone to rehearse the first part of Peter's response to the lame man's request for alms and declare, "Silver and gold have I none..." Before adhering to this perspective, howev- Foundation of Alabama and the creator of the "Big Jar/ er, consider the opportunity for Christian stewardship Little Jar" visual. Bledsoe stated in a discipleship study

"if we base our stewardship

The Alabama Baptist Foundation

- Barry Bledsoe, president

on cash only, we are ignoring 91%

of God's material blessings to us."

available from your "big jar" of assets.

Estimates by the Internal Revenue Service suggest that the overall net worth of most individuals can be divided into two jars. One container ("small

jar") holds approximately 9% of a person's assets. In general terms, the small jar represents one's cash assets and perhaps may focus primarily on that person's stream of income. The other jar ("Big Jar") contains approximately 91% of a person's wealth and consists of such items as investments (stocks, bond, mutual funds, etc.), real estate, equity in our home, life insurance, retirement assets and a host of other resources that constitute the majority portion of one's estate.

Interestingly enough, we tend to limit our understanding and practice of stewardship to "first fruits" giving which emphasizes gifts from our income. According to Fred Smith of The Gathering, 96% of all gifts to the church are derived from cash assets. When we consider the fact that Mississippi Baptists give encouraged to be ...

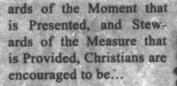
And, because God is the owner of everything (Psalm about \$400 million annually in undesignated gifts to/through our Southern Baptist churches in Mississippi, then we must also recognize that 96% of this total came from only 9% of our collective net worth.

Barry Bledsoe is the president of The Baptist

that he authored, "Upon seeing the illustration of one's assets in penny jars, two truths come immediately to mind. First, if we base our stewardship on cash only, we are ignoring 91% of God's material blessings to us. And, second, our mind-

set in estate planning should be based upon the assets represented in both jars - cash and acquired assets."

When realizing that the single greatest act of Christian stewardship and obedience that any of us may have in the course of our lifetime is the decisions we make regarding the distribution of our estate or "Big Jar" assets, then the opportunity that you and I have to be stewards of the measure that is provided is mind-boggling. Therefore, in addition to being Stewards of the Message to be Proclaimed, and Stew-



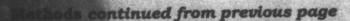
# Stewards of the Methods

that are Prescribed

Far too many people fail to plan adequately for the time when the Lord calls them into "higher service" with Him. A large percentage of our population (some estimates are between 50%-70%) die without having a valid Last Will and Testament in place. Perhaps many of these same individuals feel like they don't know where to begin

See Methods on next page





with respect to establishing an estate olan. In reality, creating an estate plan need not be complicated or overwhelming. Three documents that should be considered when developing an estate plan include (1) a Last Will and Testament, (2) a Durable Power of Attorney, and (3) an Advance Health Care Directive. The Mississippi Baptist Foundation has resources and information available for understanding these three items.

With a Last Will and Testament, decisions regarding the distribution of estate assets can be recorded for implementation at the proper time. Unfortunately, however, many (perhaps most) individuals who have prepared a valid Will have not included charities in general, or their church or other King-

dom ministries in particular, within their estate planning documents. While educational institutions and other non-profit organizations promote and encourage giving through one's Will, the church has not fully embraced this important avenue for Christian stewardship.

According to a recent survey conducted by LifeWay Research, 86% of Southern Baptist churches do nothing in the area of estate stewardship/planned giving promotion. When considering the truth that the manner in which a Christian plans for the eventual distribution of their "Big Jar" (estate assets) may be the single greatest act of stewardship that will be available in the course of a lifetime, the lack of engagement in estate stewardship promotion by our churches is resulting in untold numbers of missed opportunities for Kingdom stewardship among Mississippi Baptists. Perhaps your church could consider developing an estate stewardship ministry.

# the distribution of 'big jar' assets may be the greatest act of stewardship in a person's lifetime

Together, Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 14:25-35 provide a concise summary for practicing stewardship as a disciple of Jesus Christ. With the overarching goal of fulfilling the Great Commandments and the Great Commission by proclaiming Jesus to whomever, whenever and wherever opportunities arise, the inclusion of Kingdom ministries and missions in one's Last Will and Testament becomes a natural step for Christians. Local church ministries, Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, Cooperative Program, Baptist Children's Village, Baptist college and seminary scholarships, and others could be blessed through your estate plan.

January is "Make Your Will" month. Your friends at the Mississippi Baptist Foundation are available to help you understand how your estate plan could "Give It Twice" with a "Family and Faith...Kids and the Kingdom" approach to stewarding YOUR...I mean, GOD'S stuff!

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U.S. has ambassador for religious liberty, finally

WASHINGTON (BP) - The United States has a new State Department advocate for reious liberty overseas. The U.S. Senate confirmed David Saperstein as ambassador-at-

large for international religious freedom, in a 62-35 roll-call vote on

Saperstein, who is Jewish rabbi and long-time proponent of global religious liberty, has been director and counsel of the Religious Action Center SAPERSTEIN of Reform Judaism for more than three decades.

His confirmation ended a 4-month long vacancy during which religious freedom advocates initially urged U.S. President Barack Obama, and then the U.S. Senate, to fill the post at a time when people of faith - and America's reputation as a defender of religious liberty were suffering increasingly around the world.

"In this hour, we need all the diplomatic and intellectual energy we can muster on these issues of human rights and global security," said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville. Moore said Saper-stein will have his "full cooperation and support in the cause of protecting religious freedom around the world.

Obama's selection of Saperstein evoked misgivings from the ERLC, as well as other pro-life and religious freedom organizations, because of the nominee's liberal stances on domestic issues such as abortion and gay rights. Saperstein's assurances since his nomination have helped satisfy concerns, said a leading advocate for overseas religious liberty.

Saperstein won conservatives support by assuring them that he will advocate for re-ligious freedom for all religious groups, including those that might oppose him on issues such as abortion or same-sex marriage (no easy undertak-ing in an administra-

tion that has mounted assaults on domestic religious groups over those very issues)," wrote Thomas Farr in a mid-November blog post. Farr is director of the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.

He has gained respect as well "by convincing [conservatives] he will work very hard to elevate the status of his office, policy, and position within the State Department," wrote Farr, a former U.S. diplomat. clearly wants to make a difference in the growing crisis of religious freedom, especially in the Middle East.

"In short, many conserva-tives trust Saperstein even though they disagree with him," Farr said. "This is rare in Washington, D.C."

In a September hearing, Saperstein committed to a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to use his post "fervently (and

fiercely) to advocate for the

rights of individuals to choose,

change, and practice their faith safely, to end blasphemy and apostasy laws, and without government interference or the threat of violence or marginalization, to ensure that people are free and safe to assemble, worship, teach, learn, and share their faith with others."

According to his written testimony, he also punised to attempt to "engage every segment" of the U.S. State Department and the rest of the federal government to inte-grate religious freedom into our nation's statecraft: coun-ter-terrorism, conflict stabil-ity efforts, economic development, human rights.

Such foreign policy goals, he said, "med the stability, the security, contributions of members of religious majorities and religious minorities, in every majory to further. in every country, to further our nation's values, interests and agenda.

More than one-third of the Senate still voted against Saperstein's confirmation with one Democrat, Joe Manchin of West Virginia, joining 34 Re-

west virginia, joining 34 ke-publicans in opposition.

Moore was among religious freedom proponents who urged the president during the last year to fill the position after Suzan Johnson Cook resigned in October 2013. The post has been vacant for more than three of the six years Obama has been in the White House.

The president announced in late July his intention to nominate Saperstein, but it took more than four months for the Senate to hold a confirmation vote.

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# Bivocational music education courses to begin this month

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) -January begins Church Music Resources, the seventh of eight courses offered for bivocational music leaders.

In most locations the course will meet two hours per week for eight weeks. Saturday locations may vary. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a certificate from the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary. There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$100.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students.

First Church, Cleveland. Begins January 12 (6-8 p.m.). Alan Berry, teacher. (662) 843-2701.

#### For more information

Contact Slater Murphy, church music director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, 'MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3276 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 276. E-mail: smurphy@mbcb.org.

First Church, Marion, Begins January 12 (6-8 p.m.). Buddy McElroy, teacher. (601)

■ Brookhaven area (specific location to be announced later). Begins January 10 (9 a.m.noon), Mark Hamilton, teacher. (601) 835-6607.

First Church, Booneville. Begins January 12 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). LuAnne Ford, teacher. (662) 728-6272.

The teachers listed above can be contacted for more information, or contact Slater Murphy, church music director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3276 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 276. E-mail: smurphy@mbcb.org.

# SBC president announces racial healing initiative

By Ronnie Floyd Southern Raptist Convention president

Under deep conviction by the Holy Spirit that I must do some-thing as a Christian, a pastor, and

as the current President of the Southern Baptist Convention, this past Wednesthis day [Dec. 10], I conducted a conference call with four of our SBC Afri- FLOYD can American



pastors and two Anglo pastors. We talked openly and honestly about the growing racial tension in our nation.

The conversation we had-on this conference call led to this article. When I shared with these men my desire to write on this subject, they immediately joined in and said, "Let us help, sign our names, and enlist a few others to come alongside of speaking to the issues of racism and injustice." Various representatives of ethnicities are joining us in releasing this article to the pastors, churches, leaders, and laypeople of our Southern Baptist Convention.

#### We cry out against racism and injustice

We are grieved that racism and injustice still abound in our nation in 2014. All human beings are created by God and in His image. The dignity of each individual needs to be recognized and appreciated by each of us and by all of the 50,000 churches and congregations that comprise the Southern Baptist Convention.

Southern Baptists have always been a prophetic voice crying out against matters such as the evil

of abortion, the persecution of Christians around the world, the tragedy of human trafficking, or the sexual sins from adultery to homosexuality. The time is now for us to rise up together and cry out against the racism that still exists in our nation and our church-

es, and the subsequent injustices.
All racism and injustice is sin. All ethnicities are capable of committing the sin of racism. Pastors, churches, leaders, and laypeople of the Southern Baptist Convention, the time is now for us to repent personally at 4 collectively of all racism and injustice. Silence is not the answer and passivity is not our prescription for healing.

#### Wounds run deep

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "So if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." With heavy hearts, we recognize the deep pain and hurt that has come to many of our African American brothers and sisters. The recent events in America have reawakened many of their greatest fears. Their wounds from the past run deep.
Without relationships and

conversations, we will never understand one another. Because you hurt, we hurt with you today. We are a part of the same body of Christ, His church, which is to be a picture of the multi-faceted wisdom of God.

Because we believe the Bible. there is only one race — the hu-man race. As Bible-believing Christians, we affirm that 1) All people are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), 2) Jesus died for all people (1 John 2:2), and 3) God loves all people (John 3:16).

We are not black Christians. We are not white Christians. We are not Latino Christians. We are not Asian Christians. We are not Native American Christians. We are Christians! We are followers of Jesus Christ.

#### **Church must rise**

In this desperate hour in our nation when the racial tension is building rapidly, the church of Jesus Christ must rise. We are not black churches. We are not white churches. We are not La-tino churches. We are not Asian churches. We are not Native American churches. We are the church of Jesus Christ. We are members of the same body.

The Bible says in Ephe 3:10, "This is so God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens." Just as a jewel can be multi-colored, exhibiting beauty beyond words, the church is one powerful body when all races and ethnicities fellowship and worship together.

#### With grace

Racism and injustice must end, letting grace begin to unite us together in the bond of peace. Schisms and divisions will end when the gospel of grace begins to rule in our hearts again.

We read these words in Ephesians 2:14-15, "For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh, He made of no effect the law consist-ing of commands and expressed in regulations, so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace." Since the gospel of grace can tear down the wall of enmity and hate between Jews and Gentiles, this same gospel of grace can still tear down the walls of racism and injustice today.

Since the gospel of grace re-moves the wall between all ethnicities and races, His death on the cross has made us one in Jesus Christ. It is time for the walls of racism and injustice to come down!

Let our Southern Baptist churches rise up as one, filled with the beauty of multiple races and ethnicities, shining forth the grace of God to a world that needs the testimony and hope of the church today.

#### With love

The church must rise with both grace and love. We need to repent of our racism and injustice and return to the first commandment of loving our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says in Matthew 22:37-38, "He said to him, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command-ment." The church must fall in love with Jesus again.

When we love Jesus, we will love all people. We will see all peo-ple the way Jesus sees all people. We need to stop talking about "my people" and start loving all people. When we return to the first commandment, we will experience a revival living out the second commandment as recorded in Matthew 22:39, "The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." The church will love all people from all walks of life and even various colors of skin when

When grace is experienced personally and collectively, love will be demonstrated loudly and consistently.

#### We are a Jesus convention and a Kingdom people

In our Baptist Faith and Mes sage 2000, we find in Article XV what we believe about The Christian and Social Order. In this arti-cle, we are reminded that, "In the cle, we are reminded that, "In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism." Today we restate we oppose all racism and injustice in America and around the world.

We replace these evils with the beauty of grace and love as His people and His church. Yes, one body of Christ. We are not a black convention. We are not a white convention. We are not a Latino Convention. We are not an Asian convention. We are not a Native American convention. We are a Jesus convention.

Jesus is the Lord of our churches. We are a Kingdom people. Therefore, before our broken and hopeless world, may the walls of racism and injustice fall, and our churches rise with grace, love, and hope.

Praying John 17:21, "May they all be one as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me."

#### Submission Guidelines '

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish ws and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted. over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable

There is no guarantee that news items and/ or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

# Need a light?

#### God Commands Obedience • Ezra 7:1-10

In 1887, John H. Sammis penned the rics of the hymn "Trust and Obey." bedience requires trust. Belief alone n't enough. As proof, you and I can do nat which we "believe" is wrong.

Trust persuades us to obey when obedince makes no sense: why Joshua faithfully secuted God's odd plan to overthrow Jerino (Jos. 6:1-21); why Naaman eventually invoed seven times in the murky Jourlan to

ipped seven times in the murky Jordan to vash away his leprosy (2 Kg. 5:1-14). God banned Moses and Aaron from the

romised Land because they failed to folwhis unusual instructions: "Take the rod; d you and your brother Aaron assemble nd you and your brother Aaron assemble he congregation and speak to the rock beore their eyes, that it may yield its water"
Num. 20.8, NASB). Why take the rod?
Vhat does one say to a rock? God, knowng why Israel's two leaders disobeyed,
ebuked them: "You did not trust in me nough" (Num. 20:12, NIV).

mough" (Num. 20:12, NIV).

Trust convinces us to obey when obedince is scary: why Gideon eventually led hree hundred men to battle against an enemy too numerous to count (Jg. 7:1-25); why Amos delivered an unpopular message to a hostile, wicked audience (Am. 7:10-17).

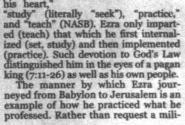
When Saul did not heed God's orders to annihilate Amalek, Samuel confronted him, insisting "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22, NASB). The rejected king finally admitted, "I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, because I feared the peoand your words, because I feared the peo-ple" (1 Sam. 15:24, NASB).

Fifty-seven years separate chapters six (515 BC) and seven (458 BC), when Ezra first appears in the book. The last four chapters (7-10) juxtapose the obedi-ence of Ezra and the disobedience of his countrymen.

#### Obedience of Ezra (7:1-8:36)

Ezra's pedigree, although impressive

(7:1-5), wasn't the reason that he lived an exemplary life. In 7:10, four verbs scribe his personal habits: "set his heart,



tary escort (8:21-23), Ezra opted to fast and pray, trusting "God's good hand" (See 7:6-9, 27-28; 8:15-19: 30-32). The grueling trip lasted four months (7:7-9) and, despite great dangers, took place without incident (8:31-32; regarding the perils of travel, see Lk. 10:30; 2 Cor. 11:26).

Ezra was a "priest" at hirth, but he

10:30; 2 Cor. 11:20).

Ezra was a "priest" at birth, but he earned the title-"scribe." In Israel's early years; "scribe" (literally "one counting or recounting") referred to a royal official (See 2

**Explore the Bible** 

with Ivan Parke

Sam. 8:15-18; 2 Kg. serving the king as a secretary (See 1 Chr. 24:1-6; 2 Chr. 26:11; Ezra 4:8) or a coun-

selor (See 1 Chr. 27:32; 2 Kg. 18:18-19:7). "Scribe," beginning with Ezra, became a religious role; someone who was an expert in the Law: teaching it and inter-preting it. Nehemiah 8 showcases Ezra in action. Before long, scribes amassed an authority that they would abuse: their pursuit of what was lawful led to legalsm. Jesus and the scribes clashed regularly (See Mt. 12:38-42; 15:1-14; 21:14-16; 23:1-36; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 19:45-48; Jn. 8:1-11).

#### Disobedience of Ezra's Countrymen (9:1-10:44)

Marriage is a battleground in the culture war that rages today, what James Dobson and Gary L. Bauer have called "the second great civil war." (Children at Risk, 1992) Homosexuals, backed by judges, politicians, journalists, and celebrities, have been redefining the traditional (and legal) definition of marriage, that which can be traced back to the Bible: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24).

In Ezra's day, like today, marriage was the epicenter of controversy. God's people had married "the people(s) of the land(s)" (9:1-2, 10-15; 10:2-4, 10-11; see also 3:3; Marriage is a battleground in the culture

(9:1-2, 10-15; 10:2-4, 10-11; see also 3'3; 4:4), a clear violation of the Law (Ex. 34:10-16; Dt. 7:1-5); the cause of Solomon's down-

fall (1 kg. 11:1-8).

The Centiles (non-Jews) were unsuitable spouses because they were pagan (ungodly), not because they were foreign (different in appearance, like skin color). God's concern has never been racial purity. Spiritual purity, on the other hand, was and remains his passion; the basis of the New Testament command, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, ESV).

Parke is professor, Department of Christian Studies and Philosophy, Missis-sippi College, and a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton.

#### The Shelter of God's Peace • Psalm 46:1-11

At the end of December many people At the end of becember hany people take time to reflect over the past year. What where the celebrations, mile markers, notes of thanksgiving, and joys? What were the struggles and trials? Then they turn their thoughts to making resolutions and establishing goals for the next year. At the beginning of this New Year maybe it's time to do something differmaybe it's time to do something different. Instead of setting resolutions, what about setting a spiritual theme? What is one thing, after praying, God wants you to learn more about this year? Maybe it's about Abiding in the Word, Trusting Him, or Being Strong and Courageous. On the cover of the Revive Our Hearts 2015 calendar, in beautiful calligraphy by Timothy R. Botts, are these words: Peace in the Storm Perhans this needs to be in the Storm. Perhaps this needs to be your theme for 2015.

Peace IN the storm-as the waves are rising, the winds are blowing fiercely, and it seems the ship is sinking. Our source of peace in the storm and before the storm peace in the storm and before the storm hits should rest on this promise and truth: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). C.H. Spurgeon says Psalm 46 is called, "The Song-of Holy Confidence". Martin Luther stated: "We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us. God powerfully and miraculously pre-

serves and defends His church and His word against all fanatical spirits, against word against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell; against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and sin '(Treasury of David). Is it any wonder he penned "A Mighty Fortress is Our God". Therefore, because God is our refuge and strength, we are not to fear the instability

nature: though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved. waters roar and foam, and mountains trem-ble" (46:2-

3). Peace is ours because no calamity can overwhelm our God. With unshakable faith Habakkuk makes this same state-

mann Habakkuk makes this same statement (3:17-19). Remember: your source of peace is found in God Himself.

In Psalm 46:4-11 the psalmist changes his focus to the instability of the nations. "There is a river", which is a reference to refreshing waters versus the torrents described in verse three. The 'City of God', which is Jerusalem, is God's earthly residence. No-

tice the phrases "God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved, and God will help her". The nations rage and the kingdoms may totter, but when He utters his voice, the earth melts. In the Secret Place, A Pilgrimage through the Psalms, Jerry Rankin "... we must never forget that God is with us. Our need is to know Him, to quit trying to solve our problems ourselves,

and to rest in Him. He will make the internal wars and conflicts cease; He will remove the threats just as "He breaks the and bow

cuts the spear in two" (v.9). Remember: in the middle of any calamity or turmoil, you can have peace.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold" (verse 7 and 11).

John MacArthur comments: "The LORD of Hosts is with us" is the precious personal presence of the Divine Warrior who secures the safety of His people" ("God with us" Isa. 7:14; 8:8,10 - "Lord of hosts" Psalms 24:10; 48:8; 59:5). A two-fold command is found in "Be still, and know He is God". It means not to panic and recognize He is Sovereign. It is a message of comfort and warning. Jesus knows our turmoil, storms and sufferings. He told the disciples in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14: 27 ESV). The world is filled with news about terrorist attacks, wars, natural disasters, acts of evil and economic failures. These things trouble our hearts. Remember: peace is yours because no nation-or act of humanity-is greater than our God. "You will keep him in perfect peace,

whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" Isaiah 26:3 NKJV). Peace in the Storm is my heart's desire,

whatever this year brings.
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" Martin

Luther's song I will learn to sing. Throughout 2015, trusting and drawing closer to the Prince of Peace-my daily

In Christ, the peace of God will guard my heart and mind, this is my stead. Daily Dwelling in the Word: Philippians

1.6-7

Leathers is a member of First Church, Madison.

Joel Dillard Ray, Sr., 90, au-thor, teacher, and former Royal Ambassadors director for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, passed away Dec. 5 in Hattiesburg after a brief illness. Born Aug. 21, 1924 in Alcorn County, he grew up in Corinth. He was married to Betty Jo Harrison for almost 62 years.

#### **OBITUARY**

**Bible Studies for Life** 

with Laura Leathers

Ray received his undergraduate degree from Mississippi Col-lege in 1948, and then enrolled at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Following graduation, he re-turned to Mississippi to serve as Royal Ambassador director. In 1956, he enrolled at New Orleans tist Convention.

Seminary for additional graduate education. While there, he taught and worked as church training consultant for the Louisiana Bap-

Returning to Mississippi in 1960, Ray taught religion at William Carey University in Hattiesburg for 20 years. He co-authored the textbook for the course, Baptist Work in Mississippi, that was used at the state's Southern Baptist colleges. He sponsored Carey's Religious Education Association and served on its Religious Activities Committee.

For 32 years, Ray also served as director of missions for Lebanon Association in Hattiesburg. He retired from Lebanon Asso ciation in 1993.

Ray is survived by his wife Betty and their two children, Rebekah Ray of Hattiesburg and Joel Dillard Ray, Jr., of Starkville, and three grandchildren.

#### Just for the Record



The children and youth of MT. PISGAH CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY, won first place with their float, Jesus Loves In Every Language, in the Carrollton/North Carrollton Christmas parade. Lanny Haley, pastor.



Twenty-two youth from CALVARY CHURCH, ROGUE CHITTO, attended the county wide youth prayer rally at Railroad Park, Brookhaven, in memory of seven youth that have died since the beginning of the school year. Jenny and Jason Leggett, youth ministers; Hal Hatten, pastor.



a Christmas musical recently.



The children of CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, shared
The R.A.'s and G.A.'s of MCLAURIN HEIGHTS CHURCH, PEARL, raised almost \$900 for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering during their second annual Lunch With Lottie.



The children's choir of CALVARY CHURCH, PETAL, performed their Christmas musical drama, An Unplugged Christmas, Dec. 14.



The R.A.'s and G.A.'s of FIRST CHURCH, CHICORA, carried gifts and treats to the children at the Baptist Children's Village in Waynesboro.

#### In other Church News:

> Leesburg Church, Morton, will host Spoken 4 in concert Jan. 4, 6:30 p.m.



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